PART THREE OF THREE
BATMAN
DARK KNIGHT
Dark City
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DARK KNIGHT, DARK CITY PART III

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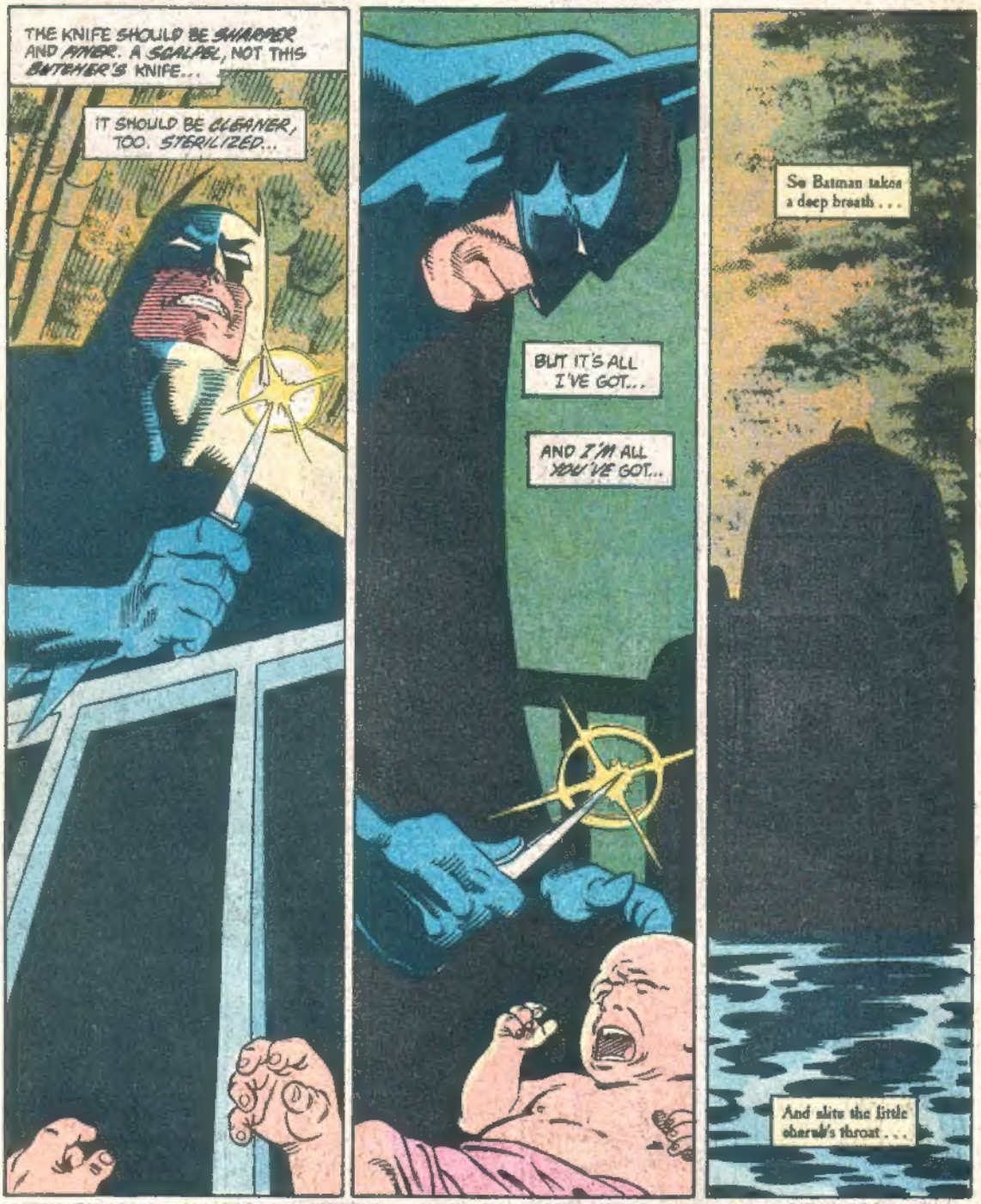
THE KNIFE SHOULD BE SHARPER AND FINER. A SCALPEL, NOT THIS BUTCHER'S KNIFE...
IT SHOULD BE CLEANER, TOO. STERILIZED...
BUT IT'S ALL I'VE GOT...
AND I'M ALL YOU'VE GOT...
So Batman takes a deep breath . . .
And slits the little cherub's throat . . .

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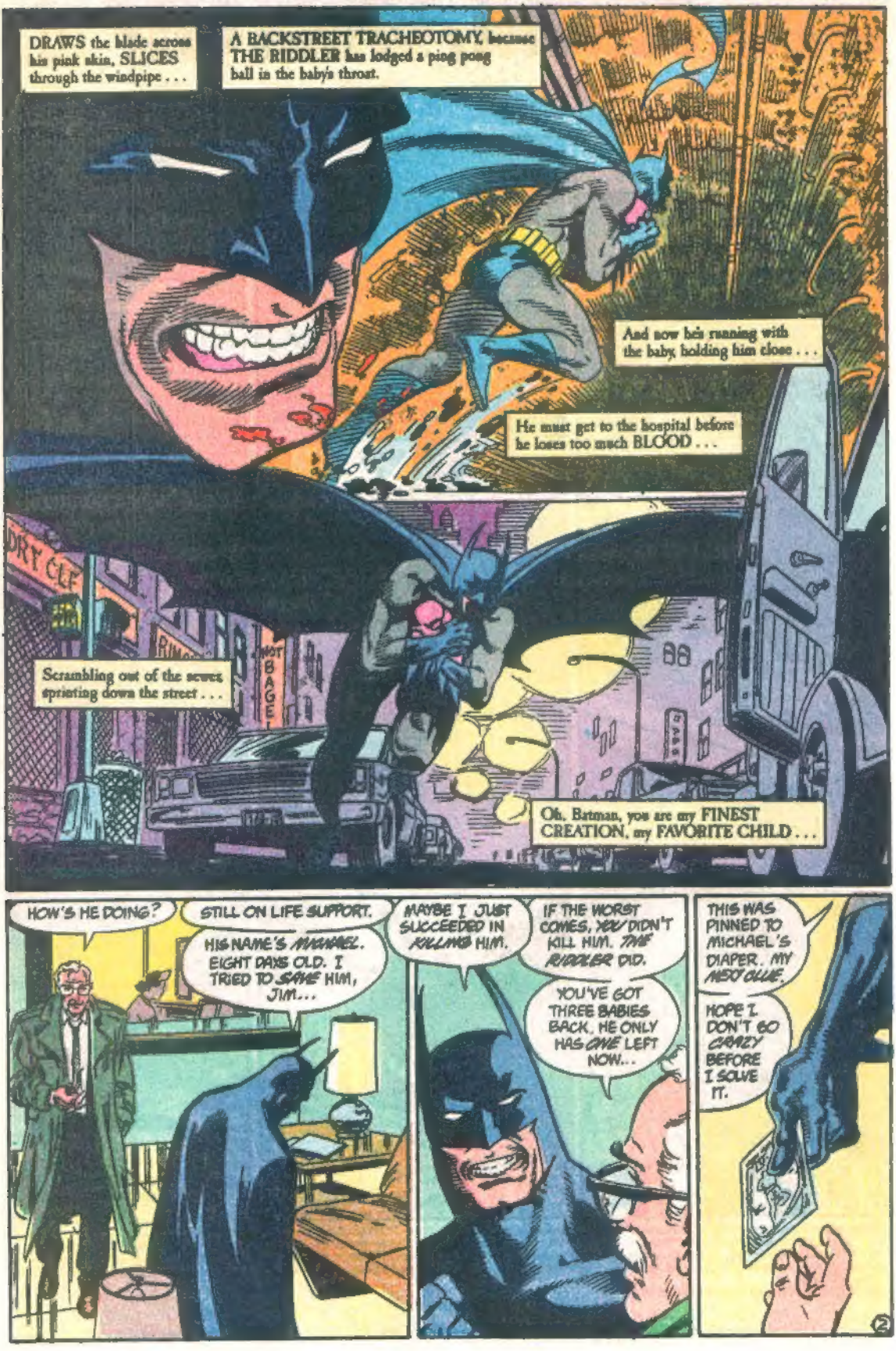
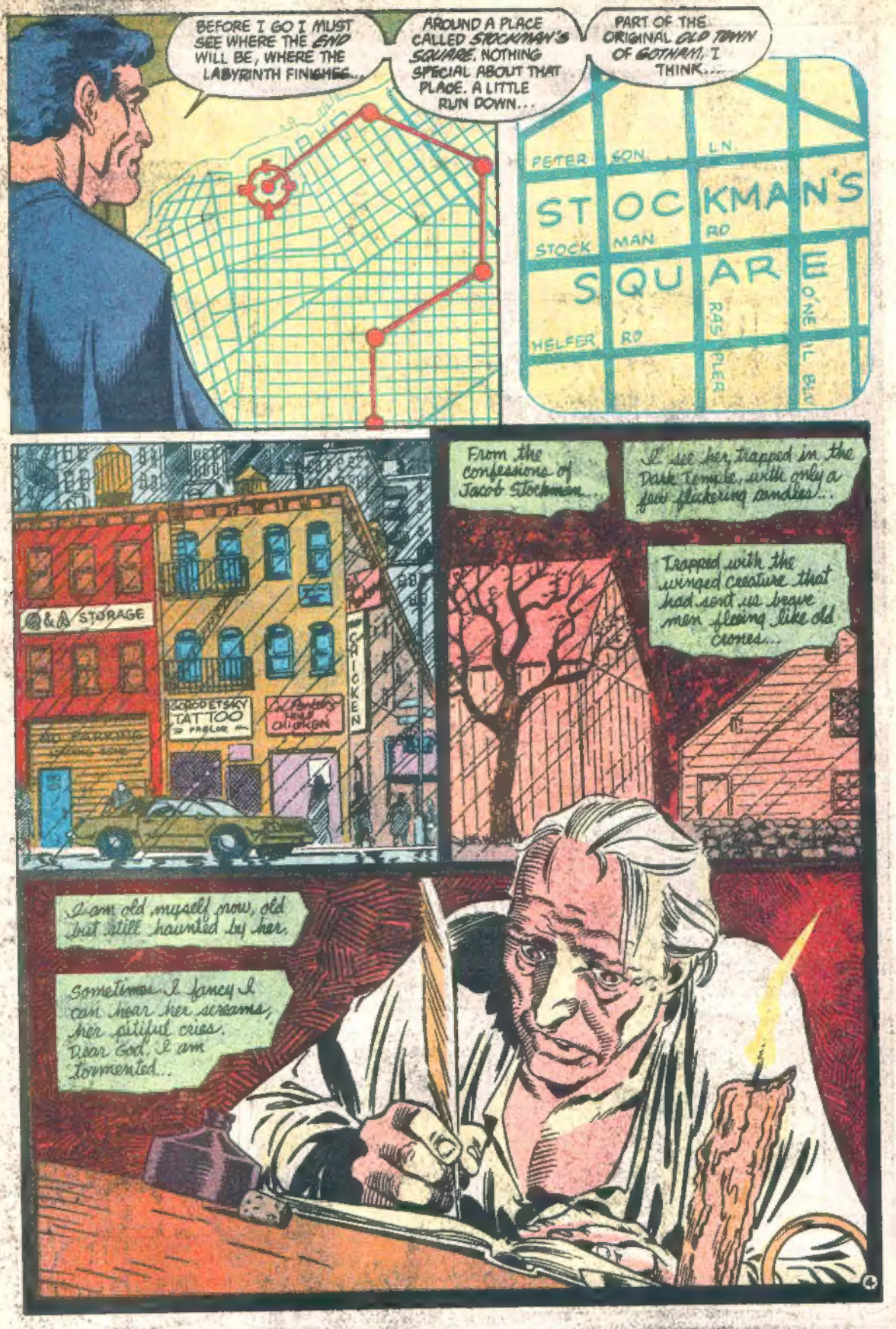

DRAWS the blade across his pink skin, SLICES through the windpipe . . .
A BACKSTREET TRACHEOTOMY, because THE RIDDLER has lodged a ping pong ball in the baby's throat.
And now he's running with the baby, holding him close . . .
He must get to the hospital before he loses too much BLOOD . . .
Scrambling out of the sewer, sprinting down the street . . .
Oh, Batman, you are my FINEST CREATION, my FAVORITE CHILD . . .
HOW'S HE DOING?
STILL ON LIFE SUPPORT.
HIS NAME'S MICHAEL. EIGHT DAYS OLD. I TRIED TO SAVE HIM, JIM...
MAYBE I JUST SUCCEEDED IN KILLING HIM.
IF THE WORST COMES, YOU DIDN'T KILL HIM. THE RIDDLER DID.
YOU'VE GOT THREE BABIES BACK. HE ONLY HAS ONE LEFT NOW...
THIS WAS PINNED TO MICHAEL'S DIAPER. MY NEW CLUE.
HOPE I DON'T GO CRAZY BEFORE I SOLVE IT.
2

"ONLY ONE LEFT, A LITTLE BOY CRAWLER...
YOU'LL FIND LOTS OF HIM, THOUGH SHORTER AND TALLER..."
THAT'S THE CLUE
LOTS OF HIM? LOTS?
LOTS, AS IN AN AUCTION, PERHAPS? AS IN THE CRYING OF LOT FORTY-NINE?
WHAT'S THAT?
A NOVEL, BY THOMAS PYNCHON, ONE OF YOUR AMERICAN WRITERS. RATHER GOOD, ACTUALLY, THOUGH I'M MORE OF AN ANTHONY BURGESS MAN MYSELF.
VERY INTERESTING, ALFRED.
I'M FEEDING IN DETAILS OF WHERE THE RIDDLER'S CLUES HAVE LED US SO FAR. MAYBE THERE'LL BE A PATTERN...
NOW, IF YOU JOIN UP THE LOCATIONS... YOU MAKE...
AN UNFINISHED QUESTION MARK, PERHAPS?
SO THE NEXT PLACE SHOULD BE HERE. THE PENULTIMATE POINT IN THE QUESTION MARK.
LET'S HAVE A BLOWUP...
THE SITE OF COONEY'S CIRCUSLAND...
GOTHAM PUBLIC
COONEY'S CIRCUS LAND
AVE
LOTS OF HIM. SHORTER AND TALLER. THE HALL OF MIRRORS, MAYBE?
3


BEFORE I GO I MUST SEE WHERE THE END WILL BE, WHERE THE LABYRINTH FINISHES...
AROUND A PLACE CALLED STOCKMAN'S SQUARE. NOTHING SPECIAL ABOUT THAT PLACE. A LITTLE RUN DOWN...
PART OF THE ORIGINAL OLD TOWN OF GOTHAM, I THINK...
PETER SON LN.
STOCKMAN'S SQUARE
STOCK MAN RD
HELFER RD
RASPLER
ONEIL BLV
Q&A STORAGE
GOODETSKY TATTOO PARLOR
CHICKEN
From the confessions of Jacob Stockman...
I see her, trapped in the Dark Temple, with only a few flickering candles...
Trapped with the winged creature that had sent us brave men fleeing like old crones...
I am old myself now, old but still haunted by her.
Sometimes I fancy I can hear her screams, her pitiful cries. Dear God, I am tormented...

She must have scratched at the bolted door until her fingers were bloody shreds, she must have screamed until her voice shattered.
She had already undergone the horror of the six stages of preparation, so she could be sacrificed to the Daemon Barbatheus, who would thenceforth be under our control...
As time passed, she must have grown weaker, until she did slide to and could not raise herself from the floor...
Weaker, until the last breath passed from her spung lips...
As I near my own death, I hope and pray that she has found Peace in Heaven. I for one shall never, I know, find such peace.
A dark place awaits Jacob Stockman. I am bound for the Pit.
Knowing how readily I deserve it, I embrace my damnation, and hunger for the flames that shall soon consume me...
5

THE CIRCUS DOESN'T OPEN TILL LATE. BY THEN, THE RIDDLER AND I WILL BE ELSEWHERE...
PERHAPS STOCKMAN'S SQUARE, THE END OF THE QUESTION MARK...
SHOCK FREAKS
IT'S A GAG!
TICKETS
GAG W/ PUKED HERE
THE RAIN BEATING A SLOW TATTOO ON MY CLOAK, THE CITY WAKING ALL AROUND ME, I STEP FURTHER INTO THE LABYRINTH...
MIRROR
COME ON, RIDDLER, WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?
GIVE ME A CLUE.
A GOAT?
WHY A GOAT, RIDDLER? WHY A GOAT IN THE HALL OF MIRRORS?
THERE'S NO WAY BACK NOW.

VERY FUNNY.
SO IT'S BEHIND ME...
I SEE THE GOAT AND THE BABY. IS THIS SUPPOSED TO MEAN SOMETHING?
RIDDLER, ARE YOU HERE? I KNOW WHERE IT ALL ENDS, STOCKMAN'S SQUARE...
MAYBE YOU'RE WRONG, FATMAN...
MAYBE THAT'S JUST A RED WHAT-CHACALLIT. A RED HERRING...
MAYBE IT ENDS HERE..
IS HE RIGHT? STOCKMAN'S SQUARE, ALL THESE CLUES, RED HERRINGS? SO I LOWER MY GUARD?
WALK INTO A DEATHTRAP?

BAD MOVE, BATTY. EVEN YOU CAN'T WALK THROUGH MAGGAS..
NO. STILL DOESN'T MAKE SENSE..
TOO MANY OTHER TIMES HE COULD'VE KILLED ME, DIDN'T EVEN TRY..
SOMETHING ELSE GOING ON.
RIDDLER'S MAKING ME JUMP TO HIS TUNE...
IN FRONT OF A GOAT?

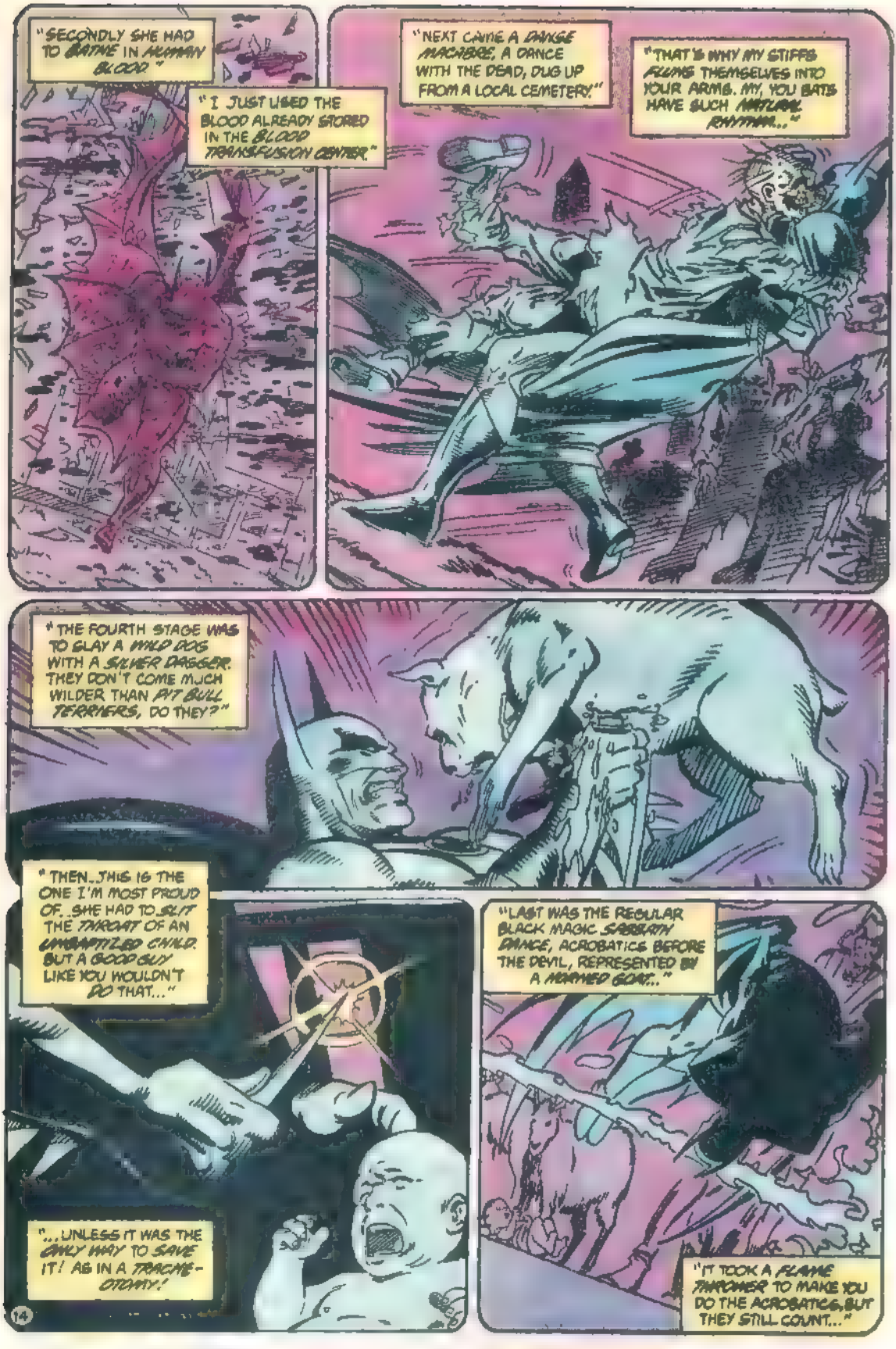
I HAND THE BABY TO A PASSING SQUAD CAR AND THEN I'M HEADED FOR A PLACE CALLED STRICKLAND'S SQUARE. THE END OF THE LABYRINTH.
WHAT KIND OF MANCATTAR WILL I FIND THERE?
ON THE WAY I CALL ALFRED THEN THE HOSPITAL...
MICHAEL'S STILL ON LIFE SUPPORT. IT COULD GO EITHER WAY.
Q&A STORAGE
Come on, Batman. Closer. Come closer. We are one . . .
THE CEREMONY has already started . . .
9

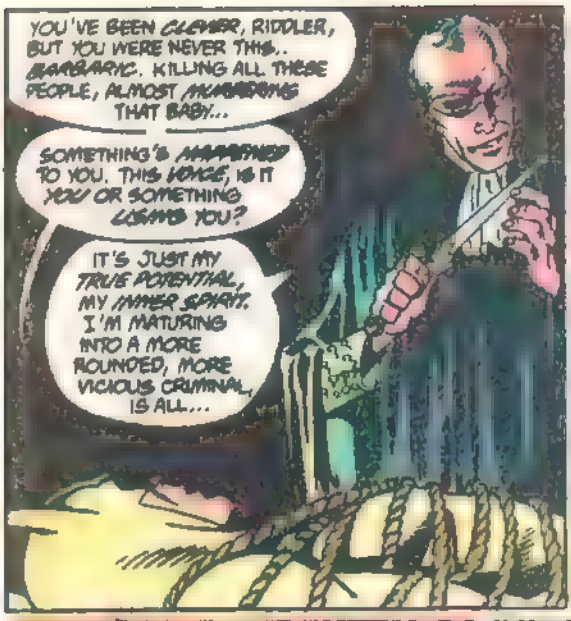
WHAT IN...?
AHHH NO..
DIDN'T THINK I'D USE THE FRONT DOOR, DID YOU?
GRRRGGG
BHOFFF
What perfect grace! What exquisite timing!
What a pity I must end it!

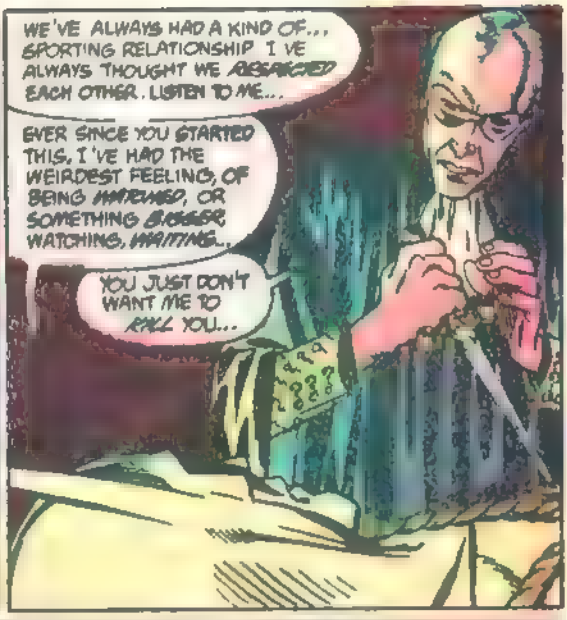
What a pity my TIMBERS here are OLD and ROTTEN . .
And so EASILY BROKEN . . .
THE GAMES ARE OVER.
I'M GONNA ROAST HIM NOW.
IDIOT! THE PREPARATIONS ARE COMPLETE HE DIES WHEN I SAY SO...
I'M THROUGH WITH ALL THAT MUMBO-JUMBO. HE GOES NOW...
BAMMM
YOU SHOT ME. YOU SHOT ME, TO SAVE BATMAN.
OF COURSE I DID. BATMAN'S MY TICKET TO RIDE.
THE HUMAN BAT...

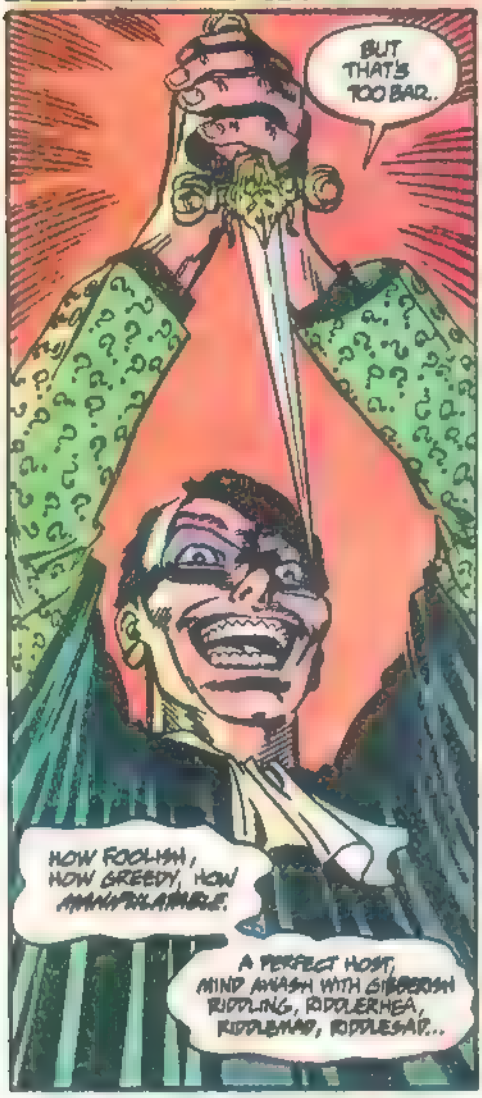
ARE YOU AWAKE?
COME ON, I WANT YOU CONSCIOUS FOR THIS. I WANT YOU TO KNOW HOW I'VE USED YOU...
THAT'S BETTER.
SEE THIS OLD BOOK? FOUND IT A FEW WEEKS BACK. WITH SOME ANTIQUES MY BOYS HEISTED
THE CONFESSIONS OF JACOB STOCKMAN...
THIS STOCKMAN GUY, HE PERFORMED A BLACK MAGIC RITE, HERE, IN THIS UNDERGROUND TEMPLE..
IT WAS CALLED THE CEREMONY OF THE BAT. HE AND SOME OF HIS PALS PERFORMED A RITE TO SUMMON A DEMON CALLED BARBATHOS
WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH...
SHUT UP! THE DEMON WAS SUMMONED, AND THEN THEY HAD TO SACRIFICE SOMEONE TO THE DEMON.
ONCE THEY SACRIFICED THIS SOMEONE, THE DEMON WAS UNDER THEIR CONTROL
THEIR VERY OWN DEMON SLAVE!
"BUT SOMETHING SCARED THEM OFF. SOME WIMPED CREATURE OR SOMETHING."
"THEY SCATTERED STOCKMAN SEALED THE TEMPLE. SOLD UP, MOVED TO CANADA. DEFINITELY THE ACTIONS OF A DESPERATE MAN..."

WHAT'S THIS GOT TO DO WITH YOU AND ME, RIDDLER?
THE DEMON WAS SUMMONED IT ONLY NEEDED THE SACRIFICE TO BRING IT UNDER CONTROL...
THE DEMON'S STILL HERE, WAITING FOR THE HUMAN BAT! WAITING FOR THE SACRIFICE
THAT'S WHERE YOU COME IN, BATMAN.
SOON AS I READ THE BOOK, I WAS GUIDED BY A VOICE IT WAS MEANT TO BE. I WAS MEANT TO CONTROL THE DEMON!
YOU WERE MEANT TO BE THE SACRIFICE!
THIS IS HER, BY THE WAY. YOUR PREDECESSOR, THE FIRST HUMAN BAT
SHE UNDERWENT SIX STAGES OF PREPARATION, TO READY HERSELF FOR SACRIFICE THIS IS WHERE MY GENIUS CAME IN. I HAD TO PREPARE YOU LIKEWISE...
SO ALL THOSE... THOSE STUPID RIDDLES, THOSE STUPID SETUPS..
YOU'VE BEEN PREPARING YOURSELF FOR YOUR OWN SACRIFICE.
EACH STEP WAS LAID OUT IN THE CONFESSIONS. I MERELY HAD TO CONTRIVE A SCENE THAT WOULD DUPLICATE THE PRESCRIBED ACT.
"FIRST SHE HAD TO KISS THE LIPS OF A HANGED MAN IN YOUR CASE IT WAS MOUTH-TO-MOUTH RESUSCITATION.."
13


"SECONDLY SHE HAD TO BATHE IN HUMAN BLOOD."
"I JUST USED THE BLOOD ALREADY STORED IN THE BLOOD TRANSFUSION CENTER."
"NEXT CAME A DANSE MACABRE, A DANCE WITH THE DEAD, DUG UP FROM A LOCAL CEMETERY."
"THAT'S WHY MY STIFFS FLUNG THEMSELVES INTO YOUR ARMS. MY, YOU BATS HAVE SUCH NATURAL RHYTHM..."
"THE FOURTH STAGE WAS TO SLAY A WILD DOG WITH A SILVER DAGGER. THEY DON'T COME MUCH WILDER THAN PIT BULL TERRIERS, DO THEY?"
"THEN..THIS IS THE ONE I'M MOST PROUD OF..SHE HAD TO SLIT THE THROAT OF AN UNBAPTIZED CHILD. BUT A GOOD GUY LIKE YOU WOULDN'T DO THAT..."
"...UNLESS IT WAS THE ONLY WAY TO SAVE IT! AS IN A TRACHE-OTOMY!
"LAST WAS THE REGULAR BLACK MAGIC SABBATH DANCE, ACROBATICS BEFORE THE DEVIL, REPRESENTED BY A HORNED GOAT..."
"IT TOOK A FLAME THROWER TO MAKE YOU DO THE ACROBATICS, BUT THEY STILL COUNT..."
14


YOU'VE BEEN CLEVER, RIDDLER, BUT YOU WERE NEVER THIS.. BARBARIC. KILLING ALL THESE PEOPLE, ALMOST MURDERING THAT BABY...
SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO YOU. THIS HOUSE, IS IT YOU OR SOMETHING LIVING YOU?
IT'S JUST MY TRUE POTENTIAL, MY INNER SPIRIT. I'M MATURING INTO A MORE ROUNDED, MORE VICIOUS CRIMINAL, IS ALL....


WE'VE ALWAYS HAD A KIND OF.., SPORTING RELATIONSHIP I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT WE RESPECTED EACH OTHER. LISTEN TO ME...
EVER SINCE YOU STARTED THIS, I'VE HAD THE WEIRDEST FEELING, OF BEING WATCHED, OR SOMETHING BIGGER, WATCHING, WAITING..
YOU JUST DON'T WANT ME TO KILL YOU...


BUT THAT'S TOO BAD..
HOW FOOLISH, HOW GREEDY, HOW MANIPULATABLE.
A PERFECT HOST, MIND AWASH WITH GIBBERISH RIDDLING, RIDDLERHEA, RIDDLEMAD, RIDDLESAP...

HUNGRY FOR POWER.. SO EASY FOR ME TO SLIP INTO YOU, TO DISGUISE MYSELF AS YOU..
TO WHISPER IN YOUR EAR AND SET YOUR HEART RACING BATMAN HAD AN INTUITION, SEE, BECAUSE BATMAN AND I ARE... CLOSELY RELATED..

HE IS BATMAN. THE DARK KNIGHT...
I AM GOTHAM. THE DARK CITY...

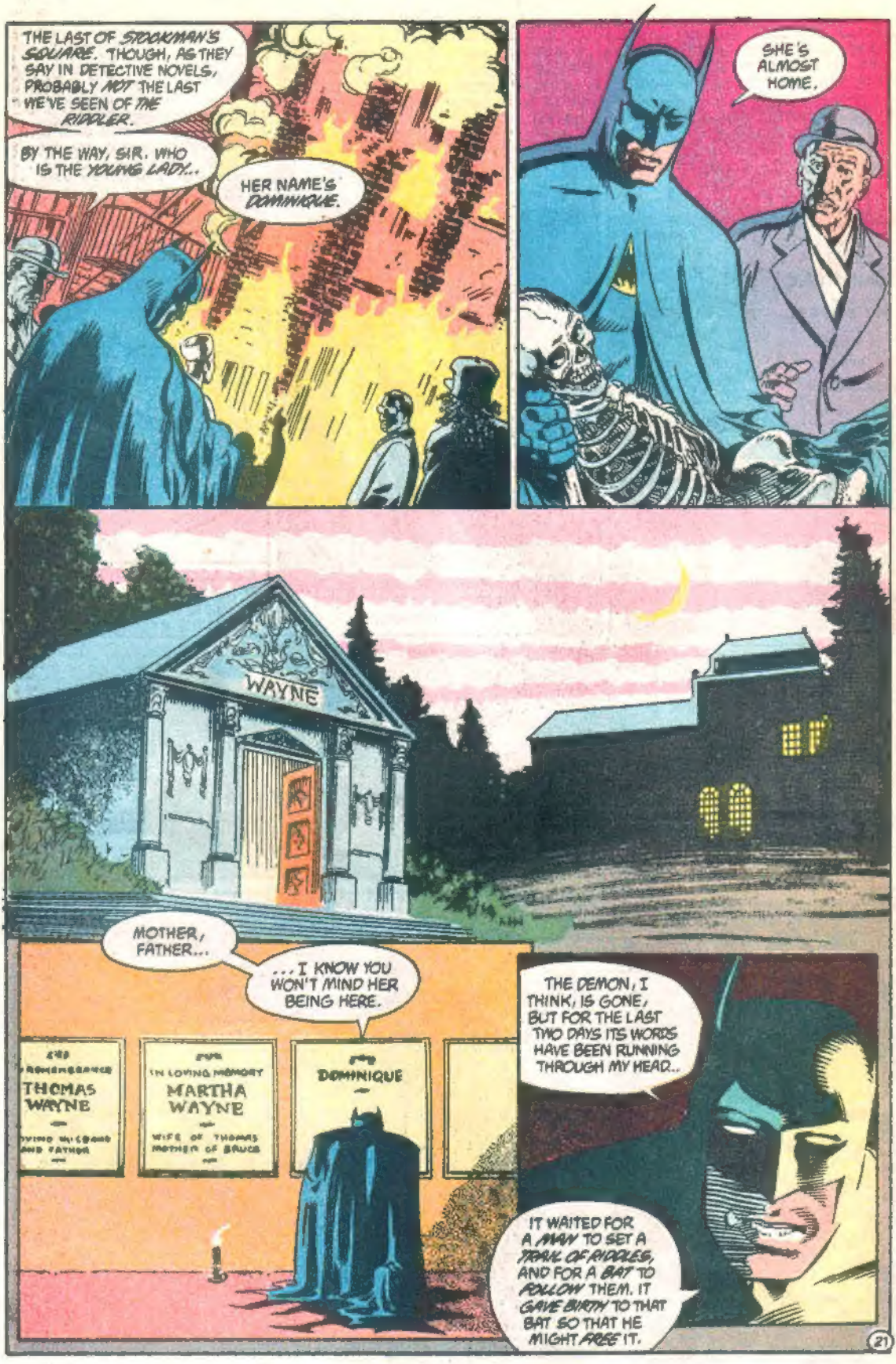
BAR.. BAR... BARBATHOS.. BAR...
THE DEMON? ARE... ARE YOU THE DEMON, OR GOTHAM, OR...
THE SAME NO DIFFERENCE
AND NOW I HAVE NO FURTHER USE FOR YOU OR YOUR BABBLING...
AHGHHHHH!
LEAVE ME ALONE. GET AWAY... GET AWAY...
MADE IT. MIGHT NOT CONTROL THE DEMON BUT GET RID OF BATMAN.
HE'LL DIE JUST LIKE THE OTHER SACRIFICIAL VICTIM, THE OTHER HUMAN BAT.
ONLY QUICKER. HOTTER.
NO TIME TO ESCAPE, BATTO...
DO YOU HEAR HIM, BATMAN?
NO TIME TO ESCAPE?
LOOK, BATMAN.

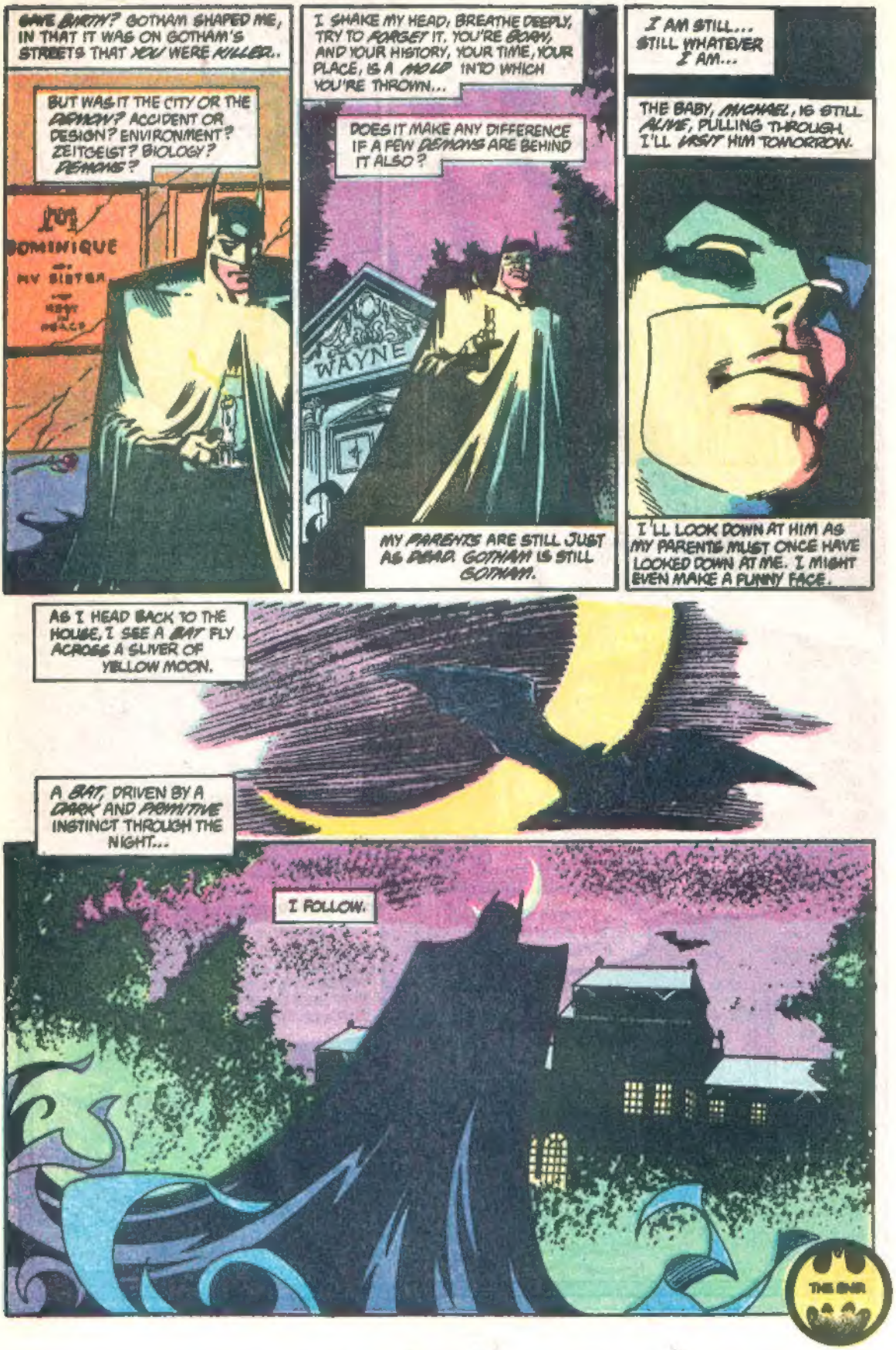
LOOK. IT'S 1765. THE CEREMONY OF THE BAT IS REACHING ITS CLIMAX.
BUT THE OCCULTISTS ARGUE! CHAOS! DISARRAY!
AND THEN THEY TAKE FRIGHT! ICY FEAR! A WINGED CREATURE FLAPPING, THE MEN DEPARTING, SCREAMING...
BUT SEE! THE GIRL AWAKES, FREED FROM THE DRUGS AND POTIONS AND MIND TRICKERY! HORROR! A LIVING NIGHTMARE!
SHE SCRATCHES AT THE DOOR, BUT THE DOOR WILL NOT MOVE. THE DOOR WILL NOT MOVE AGAIN FOR OVER TWO HUNDRED YEARS...
SHE SHRIEKS AS THE CANDLES BURN LOW, AS THE WINGS BEAT IN DARKNESS, AS DARK DEATH CLOUDS DESCEND...
WHO ARE YOU? THE DEMON? GOTHAM? HOW CAN YOU BE GOTHAM, GOTHAM'S A CITY!
THE CITY THAT MODELED YOU, THAT SHAPED YOU, WHOSE DARKNESS AND DESOLATION IS IN YOUR SOUL..

I TALK NOW THROUGH THE HUSK OF THE CREATURE THAT SO SCARED STOCKMAN. AS YOU SEE, JUST A LARGE BAT, MADE HUGE BY THE OCCULTISTS' HEIGHTENED SENSES...
THEY LEFT ME IN LIMBO, BATMAN. SUMMONED, UNDER NO ONE'S CONTROL, BUT AS TRAPPED AS THE GIRL...
MY HEART, KEPT LOCKED IN THIS PIT. WHILE ALL AROUND ME, GOTHAM GREW. AND GREW. LIKE MY OWN BODY, EXPANDING YEAR BY YEAR...
MY BLOOD AND SEED MIXED WITH THE MORTAR, MY BREATH IN THE MUD AND THE SEWERS AND THE BUILDINGS GREAT AND SMALL.
MY SPIRIT IN EVERY BRICK, IN EVERY INCH OF TIMBER. THE WHOLE CITY A BENT AND MISSHAPEN ECHO OF MY OWN DESOLATION!..
BUT I WAS PATIENT. I WAITED.
I WAITED FOR A MAN WHO WOULD SET A TRAIL OF RIDDLES...
I WAITED FOR A BAT WHO WOULD ANSWER THEM...
SO THAT HE MIGHT FREE ME.
FREE HER, BATMAN. UNTIL SHE IS FREE, I CANNOT BE FREE. NOR CAN YOU.
FREE HER. YOU ARE BROTHER AND SISTER OF THE BAT. ONLY HER BROTHER CAN SAVE HER, AND FREE ME...

"FREE HER."
HMGGHMM. IT WON'T BUDGE...
ARE YOU... THE DEMON? THE WINGED CREATURE?
NO. NO DEMON. I'M JUST AS TRAPPED AND SCARED AS YOU ARE, MISS...
LOOK...
GREAT. HE'S SET FIRE TO THE BUILDING. AND THERE'S NO WAY THIS DOOR'S GOING TO MOVE...
THIS HAS ALL BEEN A WASTE OF TIME, DEMON. WE'RE GOING TO BE BURNED ALIVE...
THE DOOR, SIR. IT'S OPENING...
MOVE AWAY. MIGHT BE THE RIDDLER, COME TO FINISH ME OFF...
HERE I AM— AS YOU REQUESTED. SEEM TO BE IN A SPOT OF TROUBLE, I SEE.
RATHER AN IMPRESSIVE FIRE BURNING UP HERE, ACTUALLY.
ALFRED!
GET OUT OF THE BUILDING...MIGHT COLLAPSE ANY MINUTE. I'LL GET THE GIRL OUT...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING, SIR. HAVE I DIED ALREADY? NO, I DON'T THINK SO.
I SEEM TO HAVE BEEN HERE FOR AGES, FOREVER. I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG. WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
BRUCE. MY PARENTS CALLED ME BRUCE. YOU?
DOMINIQUE. I FEEL I KNOW YOU, BRUCE. IT'S FUNNY. ARE WE RELATED IN SOME WAY?
YOU COULD SAY THAT. HOLD ON TO ME, DOMINIQUE. TIGHT. I'LL COVER YOU WITH MY CLOAK. IT'S FIRE-PROOF.
YOU FEEL SO WARM, BRUCE. AND I'VE BEEN COLD SO VERY LONG...
Batman! Oh, Batman! My favorite soul
The wind on my face, the sky opening, my heart torn from this earthly ribcage.
My soul ignited, my spirit rising and . . .


THE LAST OF STOCKMAN'S SQUARE. THOUGH, AS THEY SAY IN DETECTIVE NOVELS, PROBABLY NOT THE LAST WE'VE SEEN OF THE RIDDLER.
BY THE WAY, SIR. WHO IS THE YOUNG LADY...
HER NAME'S DOMINIQUE.
SHE'S ALMOST HOME.
WAYNE
MOTHER, FATHER...
...I KNOW YOU WON'T MIND HER BEING HERE.
IN LOVING MEMORY
THOMAS WAYNE
MARTHA WAYNE
WIFE OF THOMAS MOTHER OF BRUCE
DOMINIQUE
THE DEMON, I THINK, IS GONE, BUT FOR THE LAST TWO DAYS ITS WORDS HAVE BEEN RUNNING THROUGH MY HEAD..
IT WAITED FOR A MAN TO SET A TRAIL OF RIDDLES, AND FOR A BAT TO FOLLOW THEM. IT GAVE BIRTH TO THAT BAT SO THAT HE MIGHT FREE IT.
21


GAVE BIRTH? GOTHAM SHAPED ME, IN THAT IT WAS ON GOTHAM'S STREETS THAT YOU WERE KILLED.
BUT WAS IT THE CITY OR THE DEMONS? ACCIDENT OR DESIGN? ENVIRONMENT? ZEITGEIST? BIOLOGY? DEMONS?
DOMINIQUE
MY SISTER
I SHAKE MY HEAD, BREATHE DEEPLY, TRY TO FORGET IT. YOU'RE BORN, AND YOUR HISTORY, YOUR TIME, YOUR PLACE, IS A MOLD INTO WHICH YOU'RE THROWN...
DOES IT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE IF A FEW DEMONS ARE BEHIND IT ALSO?
WAYNE
MY PARENTS ARE STILL JUST AS DEAD. GOTHAM IS STILL GOTHAM.
I AM STILL... STILL WHATEVER I AM...
THE BABY, MICHAEL, IS STILL ALIVE, PULLING THROUGH. I'LL VISIT HIM TOMORROW.
I'LL LOOK DOWN AT HIM AS MY PARENTS MUST ONCE HAVE LOOKED DOWN AT ME. I MIGHT EVEN MAKE A FUNNY FACE.
AS I HEAD BACK TO THE HOUSE, I SEE A BAT FLY ACROSS A SLIVER OF YELLOW MOON.
A BAT, DRIVEN BY A DARK AND PRIMITIVE INSTINCT THROUGH THE NIGHT...
I FOLLOW.
THE END